Article Review: Examination of relationships between instructional leadership of school principals and self-efficacy of teachers and collective teacher efficacy.

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This article examines and reports on the findings from a 2010-2011 research project consisting of 328 classroom and branch teachers in Ankara, Turkey. Classroom teachers would be considered generalists and branch teachers have training in one specific subject matter. The goal of the study was to examine the relationship between instructional leadership by principals and teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy. The thesis was that specific and identified instructional leadership behaviors could be shown to improve teacher self and collective efficacy.

The teachers were from public primary schools and 65.5% were female. The average age of all participants was 34.3 and the average teaching experience was 10.5 years. Principals’ instructional leadership behaviors were evaluated through the instructional leadership scale (Şişman, 2002). The Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) was used along with the Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000), (as cited in Çalik, T., Sezgin, F., Kilinç, A.C., & Kavgachi, H., 2012, p. 2500).

The authors identify a gap in the literature around specific behaviors of principals as related to instructional leadership that lead to self as well as collective efficacy. The importance of this gap in the knowledge is determined as greater teacher efficacy is seen as an indicator related to increased student achievement and the relationship with instructional leadership had been alluded to but not fully researched (p. 2499).

The authors briefly discuss instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy as elements of the conceptual framework for the study. The authors note that “it
is expected that explaining the relationships between self-efficacy and collective efficacy, and
detecting the effects of school principals’ leadership behaviors on these efficacy beliefs will
significantly contribute to improving school effectiveness and capacity, and increasing student
achievement” (p. 2499). In the review of literature it is noted that instructional leadership has
become a significant area of interest for researchers as an increase in school expectations and
accountability has been seen in recent years.

The review of literature is extensive including many current as well as decades of
previous research from multiple countries. Those studies referenced include articles from many
scholarly journals including *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *Journal of
Educational Psychology*, *The Journal of Educational Research*, and *Educational Administration
Quarterly*. The literature also includes multiple doctoral dissertations, Bandura’s extensive work
on efficacy, and a number of studies authored by Wayne K. Hoy as well as his wife Anita
Woolfolk Hoy, both from Ohio State University. Many of the studies included are primary
source. This supports the authors claim that a gap in the literature exists and affirms the need for
this and further studies in the same area. One limited references was made to contradictory
findings in regards to instructional leadership and the relationship to increased collective efficacy
(Fancera, 2009). This one example is merely mentioned and there is no exploration as to what
Fancera found and the authors do not endeavor to discover or provide any context to this counter
argument. While the review of the literature is extensive, it is also brief.

The review is not overly critical and analytical in nature as mere mentions of pre-existing
studies are listed to support the goals pertaining directly to the authors. The most critical
elements reveal how previously existing studies allude to instructional leadership behaviors
being related to self and collective efficacy but there is no exploration of which elements of
instructional leadership are most effective in increasing efficacy either individually or collectively (p. 2499). In this regard, the authors find purpose for their study and argue for further examination to be continued.

The review is very well organized as the purpose of the study is clearly stated and defended. The link between self-efficacy and the collective teacher efficacy is well presented. Relevant definitions are provided with supporting research before a description of the method, population and sample, instruments, data analysis and findings are discussed. The strengths in the research include the associational research model aimed “to examine the relationships between two or more variables without trying to influence them” (p. 2500), the large sample size, standardization of instruments (one being adapted to Turkish culture), and the data analysis programs listed (p. 2500). There are supporting references to confirm the instruments’ effectiveness and validity. These strengths are also the study’s weaknesses. The associational research model cannot account for many variables which may be influencing the intended outcomes. For example, there is no discussion around the extent of professional development in terms of application and evaluation of teaching strategies and no discussion around classroom dynamics and demographics. The instruments are entirely qualitative and correlation values can always be questioned, particularly with no replication. The sample size, albeit large; is only derived from one city, one short span of grade levels and one school year.

The authors argue “that instructional leadership appears as an effective antecedent while building the collective efficacy” (p. 2501). The links identified between self-efficacy and collective efficacy support the thesis that principals’ instructional leadership behaviors will lead to increased self and collective teacher efficacy. The importance of this is once again noted throughout as improved self-efficacy has been shown to be a determinant of increased student
achievement and that improved collective teacher efficacy has been shown to support change initiatives designed to also increase student achievement at a broader school or district level. As such, the research as it has been undertaken reveals an important area for further discussion that needs to be examined cross-culturally and internationally as well as throughout multiple grade levels and settings.

The importance of this work in terms of educational policy is reflected locally and indeed globally through the development of supervision and evaluation policies. The authors note that there are a lot of expectations for school principals and that instructional leadership is one area that has recently come under scrutiny (p. 2499). This is the most key element to teacher supervision to effectively inform evaluation and it is often taking a back seat to other required tasks. Instructional leadership cannot be undermined as new teachers as well as old required current and relevant professional development in order to better meet the needs of today’s diverse learners. How can a leader be an effective instructional leader when they themselves may not have taught in the last 10 years? What if they have never used a Smart Board, Chromebook or iPad? How can an administrator be an effective instructional leader if they have not taught a similar grade level or course content? There is far more to instructional leadership that needs to be addressed and this study only scratches the surface of ongoing issues in education.

The authors cite previous research from Jhanke (2010) and Wood and Bandura (1998) in trying to determine what instructional leaders must endeavor to accomplish:

Some of those factors [identified] in developing collective efficacy were a positive and supportive environment, clear and understandable vision and aims, high expectations, a significant professional development, and shared leadership. Among them, especially clear and understandable vision and specifying high expectations behaviors are also the
behaviors of an instructional leader. Mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion and emotional states are listed among the resources of self-efficacy (p. 2501). Instructional leaders are the basis for the authors ever so briefly mentioned (p. 2501) transformational leadership which has been seen as “one of the current and most popular approaches to leadership since the early 1980s” (Northouse, 2013, p. 185). The notion that school administrators’ essentially nurturing and supporting teacher development and growth is nothing that we need to be told will benefit students. There are however, significant differences in how teacher development is supported and encouraged; planned and implemented. Further issues to consider are if these leadership skills can be taught or if they must be learned? What type of administrative mentorship programs could be developed or are currently in practice? Also, what prerequisites are to be considered before the tasks of an instructional leader can be undertaken? Here I bring to light considerations for the culture of a building as well as the elements of social justice that can affect a community of learning.